



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MUSIC

2014.2015

SEASON OF EVENTS

University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, conductor

Victoria Chung, piano

Thursday, October 2, 2014

7:30 p.m. MacMillan Theatre

Edward Johnson Building

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University of Toronto Symphony Orchestra

David Briskin, conductor

PROGRAM

Edvard Grieg
(1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor

Allegro molto moderato

Adagio

Allegro moderato molto e marcato -

Quasi presto - Andante maestoso

Victoria Chung, piano

INTERMISSION

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64

Andante - Allegro con anima

Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza

Valse: Allegro moderato

Finale: Andante maestoso-Allegro vivace

PROGRAM NOTES

EDVARD GRIEG (1843-1907)

Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16 (1868)

Edvard Grieg was only 25 years old when he wrote his first - and only - concerto. He had just returned from his studies in Leipzig, and was beginning to explore the vastness of Norwegian folk music. Reflecting his studies, the architecture of the piano concerto is common: a first movement in sonata form, with the usual double exposition (meaning, the orchestra plays the entire first section through once before the piano does) and cadenza placed at the very end, just before the coda. A slow second movement follows, and the finale is a lively dance, less weighty compared to the first movement. Departures from the norm—the famous introduction, for example, or the written-out cadenza or the linked second and third move-

ments—are far from innovations; composers have explored these avenues decades past. Yet its content is Norwegian, exotic to the audience who would have been at its premiere. Nowhere is this more evident than in the main theme of the finale. Its character is derived from the Halving, a virtuosic Norwegian dance characterized by leaps and kicks (and reflected in the music by sharp accents and flourishes).

Grieg showed Franz Liszt a manuscript of the concerto in 1870. Liszt immediately played the entire concerto on sight, praising it all the while. The second theme of the finale – presented as a gentle F major the first time around – reaches its glorious conclusion in the recapitulation. Liszt tore through it mightily, then a few measures from the end “suddenly stopped, rose up to his full height, left the piano, and with big theatrical strides and arms

uplifted, walked across the large cloister hall, at the same time literally roaring the theme.” After finally returning to the piano and finishing the concerto, Liszt told Grieg, “Keep steadily on; I tell you, you have the capability, and – do not let them intimidate you.” Grieg took those words to heart; he would tour with the concerto the rest of his life, and it quickly became one of his most popular pieces.

PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY (1840-1893)
Symphony No. 5 in E minor, Op. 64 (1888)

“I would like to take this opportunity to clear up [those who]... erroneously thought [Tchaikovsky’s music] to be touched by the spirit of pessimism,” wrote Dmitri Shostakovich. “Tchaikovsky was sensitive to the *tragedy*, the conflict in the development of human life, both personal and social (emphasis mine).” Nowhere is this more evident than in his three “mature” symphonies. With its triumphant conclusion, Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony shares a similar outlook with his Fourth. Yet its dark opening has more in common with his Sixth. Straddling the two, the Fifth Symphony likewise shares similar contemplations on fate and death. As with all of Tchaikovsky’s works, melody is at the forefront: tense and uncertain in the first movement, yearning in the second, graceful in the third, and unrestrained in the finale. Also typical of Tchaikovsky is the expression of raw emotion through these melodies,

rather than a philosophical contemplation through the symphony’s organization (as the Germans were known to do).

The Fifth Symphony is cyclical: that is, the opening theme reappears throughout all four movements of the symphony. One could trace the symphony’s emotional journey by means of this theme. In the first movement it appears only as an introduction to set the scene, and is truly pessimistic (despite Shostakovich’s argument; but wait...!). If possible, it becomes even darker in the second movement. It intrudes twice to rebuke the folly of resisting fate. In the third movement, one sees only a ghost of the theme, at the very end. So far, this theme had not been entirely comfortable in the music; it appeared on the outer fringes of movements one and three, and as rude intrusions in the second. It is only in the finale that the theme arrives home, being fully integrated into the movement’s structure. Moreover, its previously pessimistic outlook is transformed into an ever-growing celebration. Unlike the Fourth Symphony, where hints of darkness cloud the triumph, and the Sixth, which ends without hope or redemption, the finale of the Fifth Symphony is unrestrained optimism. In the Fifth Symphony at least, the conflict of which Shostakovich spoke ends with a confirmation of life.

Program notes by Matthew Poon, graduate student in music theory at the University of Toronto.

BIOGRAPHIES

Music Director and Principal Conductor of The National Ballet of Canada since 2006, **David Briskin** is widely recognized as one of contemporary ballet’s most accomplished conductors, noted both for the range of his repertoire and the insightfulness and sensitivity of his interpretations. He joined the University of Toronto, Faculty of Music in 2008.

Mr. Briskin served as Conductor with American Ballet Theatre for seven years, leading performances with the company at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York’s City Center and in major opera houses throughout the world. Before moving to Toronto, he worked regularly with New York City Ballet, conducting at the State Theater at Lincoln Center, and on tour in Europe and the US. In demand

as a guest conductor, Mr. Briskin appears regularly at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden with The Royal Ballet, most recently conducting the world premiere of *A Winter’s Tale* by Christopher Wheeldon and Joby Talbot. Mr. Briskin also appears regularly with San Francisco Ballet and has conducted The Joffrey Ballet, Houston Ballet and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, among others. He served as Conductor of The Juilliard School’s Dance Division for 12 years.

Equally at home with orchestral and operatic repertoire, Mr. Briskin has appeared with orchestras and opera companies throughout Europe, Asia and North America. He has conducted the Pittsburgh, Detroit, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Windsor and Shanghai

Symphony Orchestras, among others, as well as such opera companies as Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, Opera Carolina, Lake George Opera and Sarasota Opera. For six years he served as the Music Director of the 150-voice Masterwork Chorus and Orchestra in New York, a tenure highlighted by annual performances at Carnegie Hall.

Victoria Chung began her musical studies at the age of four with her mother. Born in Canada in 1992 and raised in Taiwan before attending the University of Toronto in 2010, Victoria grew up in a close knit Christian family with a strong musical background. She is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance at the Faculty of Music as a student of Marietta Orlov.

Victoria has won many awards in Taiwan, including 1st prize of Kaohsiung City CHAIRMAN CUP Music Competition (four times), 3rd Prize at the National Hsing-Tian Kong Music Competition (Piano Solo Teenager Group) and 2nd Prize in the Wei Wu Ying National Piano Competition for Senior High School Music Talented Class Students. She was admitted into the Division of Music of the Municipal Kaohsiung Senior High School with the 2nd highest school entrance exam scores. She was nominated to compete in the NTD International Piano Competition organized by New Tang Dynasty Television and reached the Quarterfinals of the International Taipei Chopin Piano Competition. Victoria appears tonight as a winner of the 2014 UTSO Concerto Competition.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Uri Mayer *conductor*

Sam Tam *conductor*

Elizabeth Polese *soprano*

Weber: *Oberon Overture*

Brahms: *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*

Mozart: *Exsultate, Jubilate, K. 165*

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 7 in A major*

Saturday, October 25, 7:30 pm. MacMillan Theatre

\$10 student, \$20 senior, \$30 adult

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Amos Wong
Matthew Wilkinson
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Jimmy Zhang

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Jun Kyu Park, *principal*
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Alice Kim

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